

6.5.2008 - Rahall: Democratsâ€™ Budget Invests in America

U.S. Rep. Nick Rahall, D-WV, cast his vote

Thursday in support of a concurrent budget resolution that rejects harmful spending cuts made by the President in favor of investing in education, healthcare, and infrastructure priorities that benefit West Virginia's working families and boost the American economy.

"President Bush's budget slashes

essential programs such as Medicare and Medicaid at a time when working West Virginians need them most," said Rahall. "In stark contrast to the President's harmful cuts, the Democratic bill balances the budget in five years and invests in America."

The budget resolution corrects

these harmful cuts, by rejecting the President's \$573 billion cut to Medicare and Medicaid over the next 10 years that would endanger West Virginia's 341,000 Medicare and 300,000 Medicaid recipients' access to healthcare services, and cuts made to a host of other domestic programs, which allow many hard-working West Virginia families to lead healthy, productive lives.

The resolution also rejects cuts

to community service programs, such as the Community Development Block Grant, Social Services Block Grant, the Low-Income Energy Assistance Program, which are crucial to the health and well-being of many West Virginians.

"This budget is another important

step on the road to economic recovery," said Rahall. "It extends tax relief to working families, improves federal student aid programs, and expands children's healthcare. By reducing the burden of education and healthcare costs, we are working to ease the strain placed on hard-working American families and support a healthy, productive workforce, which our country needs to remain competitive in the global economy."

Additionally, the budget puts West Virginia's

hard-working families first, by providing a substantial increase in funding above previous levels for the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP) and vital education, job training, and social services programs for 2009. It also modernizes the Higher Education Act, making college education more affordable for working families.

"It gives me great pleasure to

once again take our brave soldiers, veterans, and local law enforcement officers off the President's budgetary chopping block," Rahall said. "These men and women risk their lives in the name of national security and now they are getting the long-overdue funding worthy of their sacrifice."

The budget resolution addresses

the needs of America's veterans by rejecting the President's proposed new fees and increasing veterans funding for 2009 by \$3.7 billion, allowing the VA to treat 5.8 million patients in 2009, including 333,275 veterans returning from Iraq and Afghanistan. The budget also protects Americans at home by restoring homeland security funding cut from the President's request and rejecting the President's cuts to law enforcement programs, including Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS), Edward Byrne Justice Assistance Grants (JAG), and the State Criminal Alien Assistance Program.

“As Vice Chairman and long-time member of the House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure, I have been a long-time advocate of using infrastructure investment to revitalize the economy—across the nation and especially here in West Virginia,” said Rahall. “I am pleased that the budget resolution funds several highway and transit programs authorized in the 2005 Transportation Bill, which I helped craft, to strengthen America’s transportation system and meet our growing infrastructure needs.”

Specifically, the budget provides \$41.2 billion on federal investment for highway programs, including \$10.3 billion for transit programs and \$1.3 billion for safety programs, fulfilling our commitment to make sure that our states can continue to build and repair our highways and bridges. Additionally, the budget provides \$3.9 billion in 2009 for the Airport Improvement program and \$1.8 billion in assistance to Amtrak.

“Our budget eases the strain on hard-working West Virginians, creates jobs, and makes America safer,” said Rahall. “It restores our infrastructure and rebuilds our economy. I am proud to have cast my vote for this budget, which does all of this and more, while balancing the budget and investing in America.”